



# A Desire for Dialogue

Podcasts and Forums as a  
Response to Media Polarization

# The Trend

- A shift from more polarized forms of media to platforms that better facilitate meaningful dialogue



# Perspective

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- 10 years ago:  
Facebook as the new  
Aeropagus (Mars Hill)  
where our culture  
exchanges ideas
- **Acts 17:19-21**

An aerial photograph of a city built on a rocky hillside. In the foreground, a large, light-colored rock formation dominates the view. Several people are visible on the rock formation, some standing and some sitting. The city in the background consists of numerous buildings, some with red roofs, and a few taller structures. The overall scene is a mix of natural rock formations and urban development.

# Question

- *When did you join Facebook? What were your reasons?*
- *Do you know anyone who has recently disengaged from it? What were their reasons?*



## Trend Indicators

- Political polarization in America
- Polarization of mainstream media and main social media platforms
- Leveling and decline of their usage
- Rise of alternative platforms

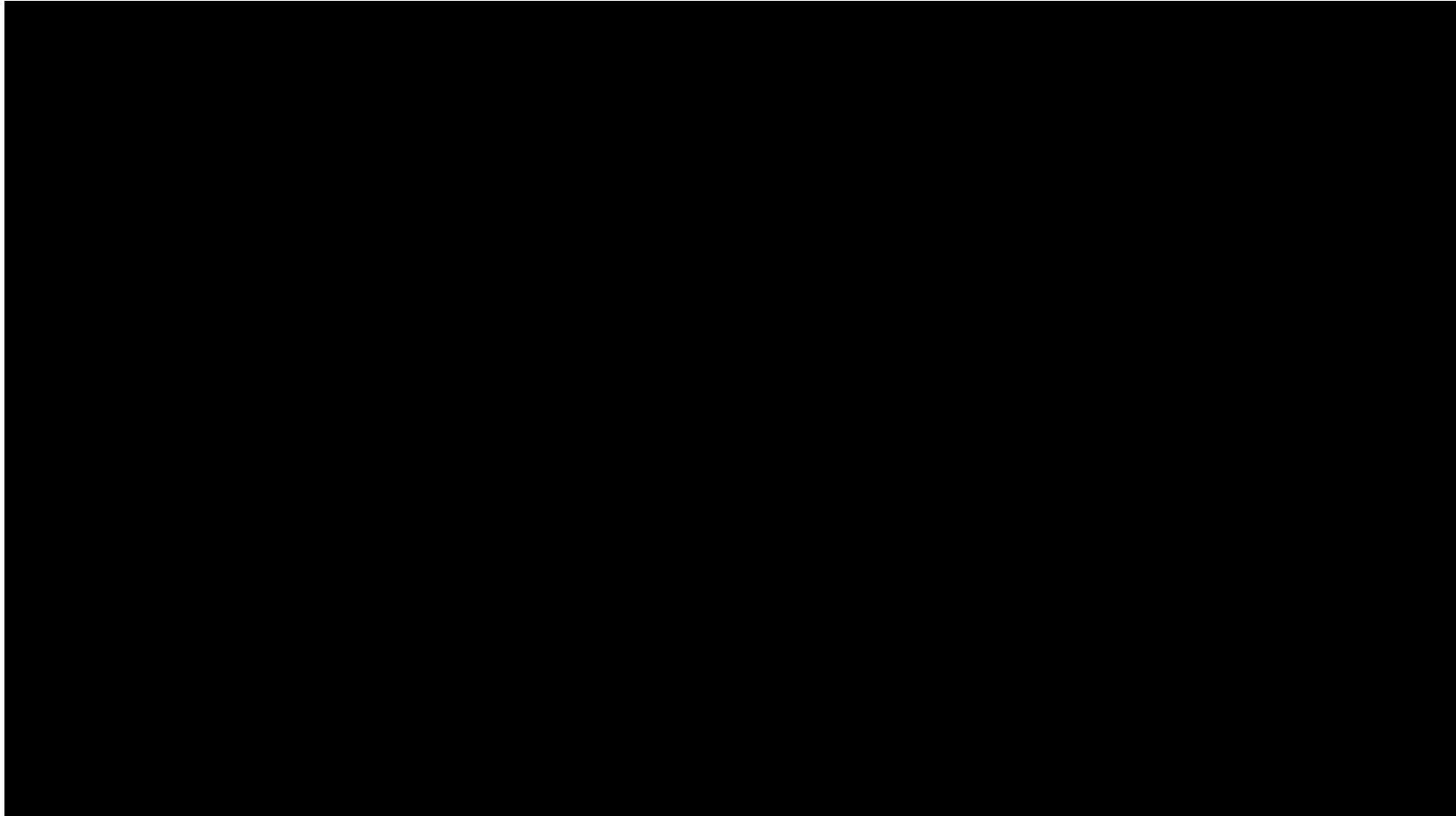
# Political Polarization in America

May 5, CBS News

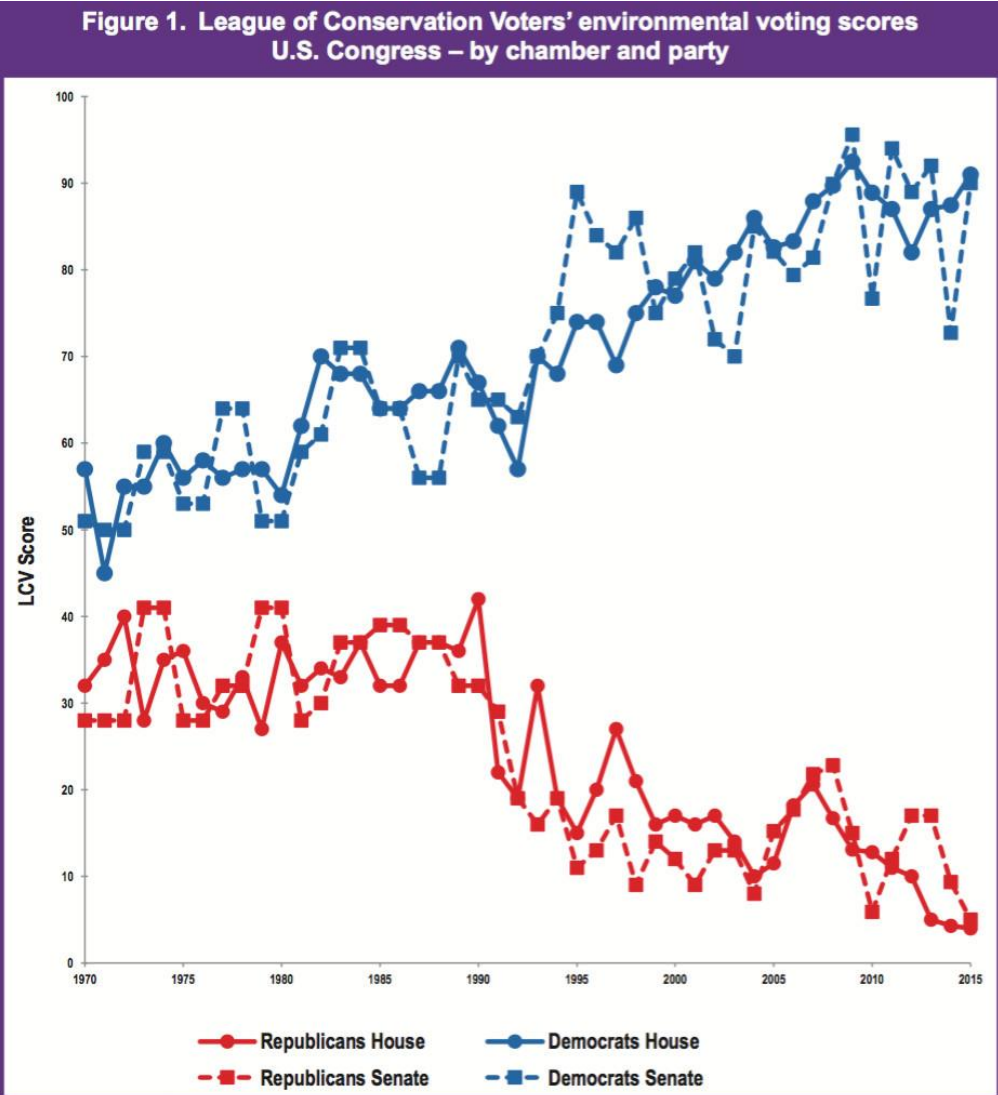
- **"One-hundred percent of our focus is on stopping this new administration,"** McConnell said, adding, "We're confronted with severe challenges from a new administration, and a narrow majority of Democrats in the House and a 50-50 Senate to turn America into a socialist country, and that's 100 percent of my focus."
- May 12 – ousting Liz Cheney from 3<sup>rd</sup> in command for opposing Trump, voting for impeachment



# Political Polarization in America

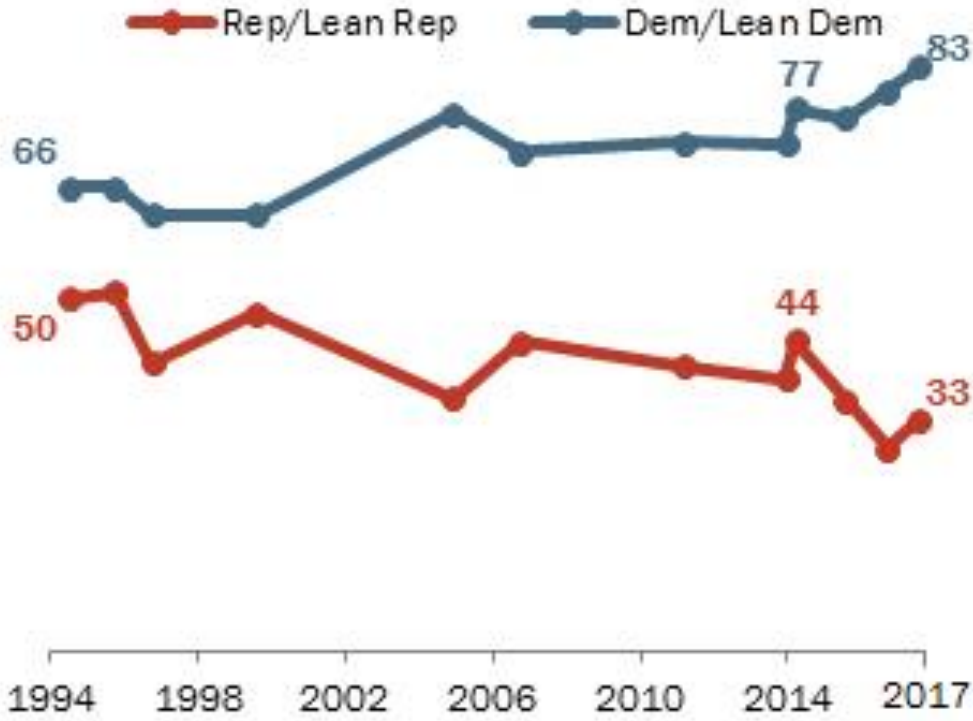


# Political Polarization in America



Source: League of Conservation Voters

*% who say good diplomacy is best way to ensure peace*

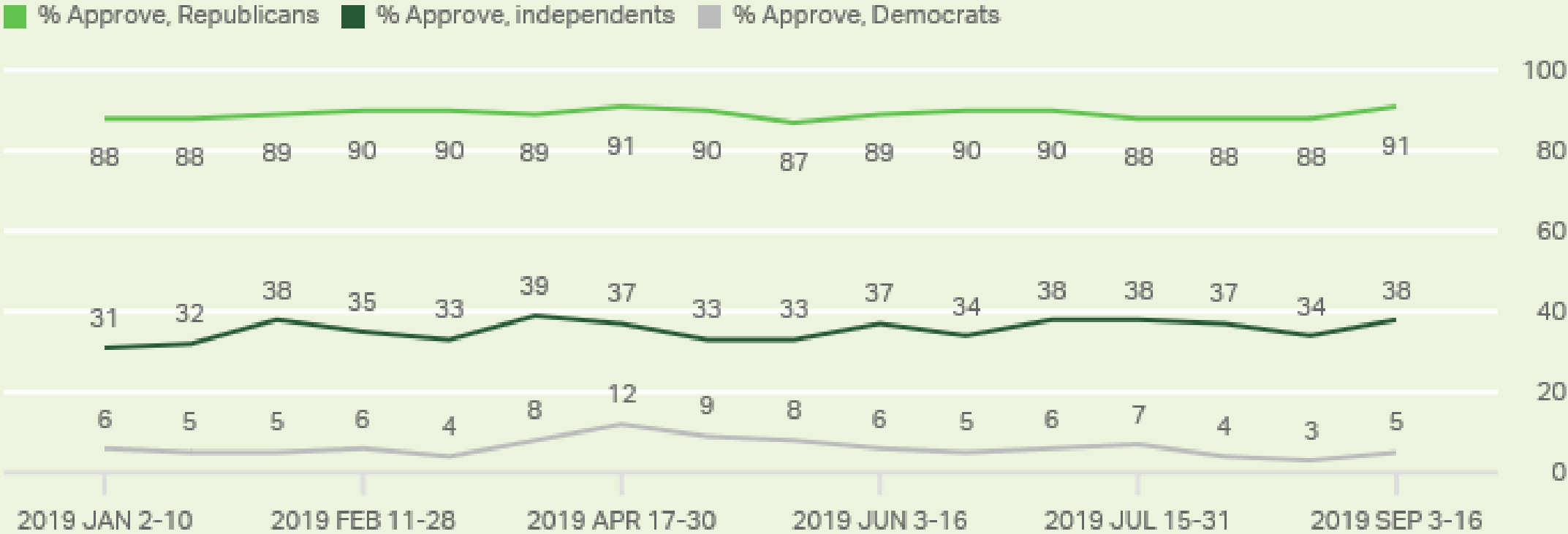


Note: Don't know responses not shown.  
 Source: Survey conducted June 8-July 9, 2017.



# Political Polarization in America

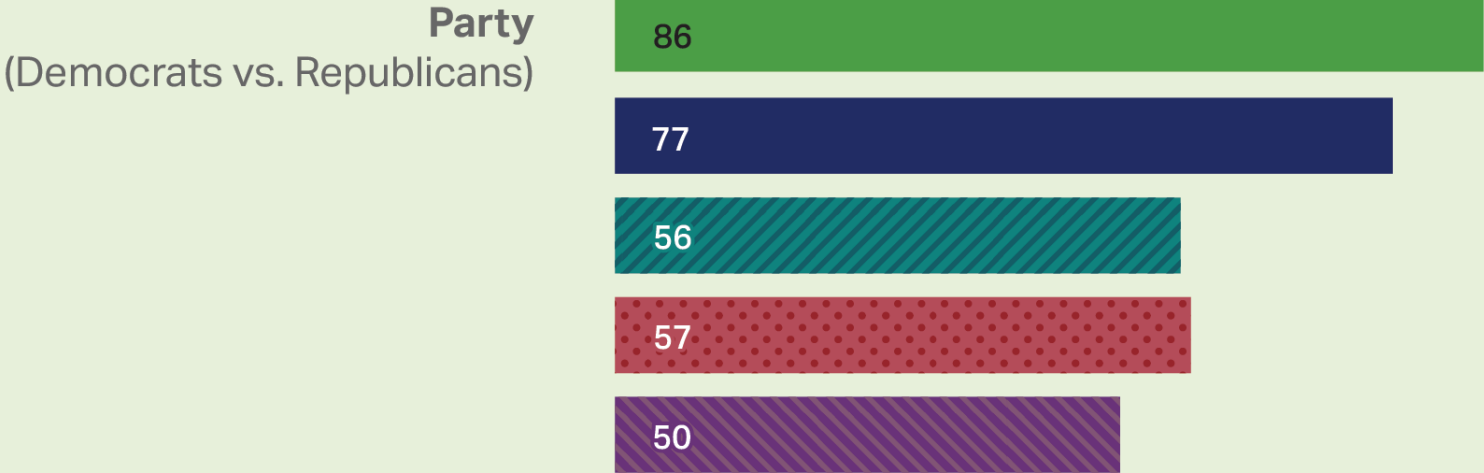
## President Donald Trump's Job Approval Ratings, 2019



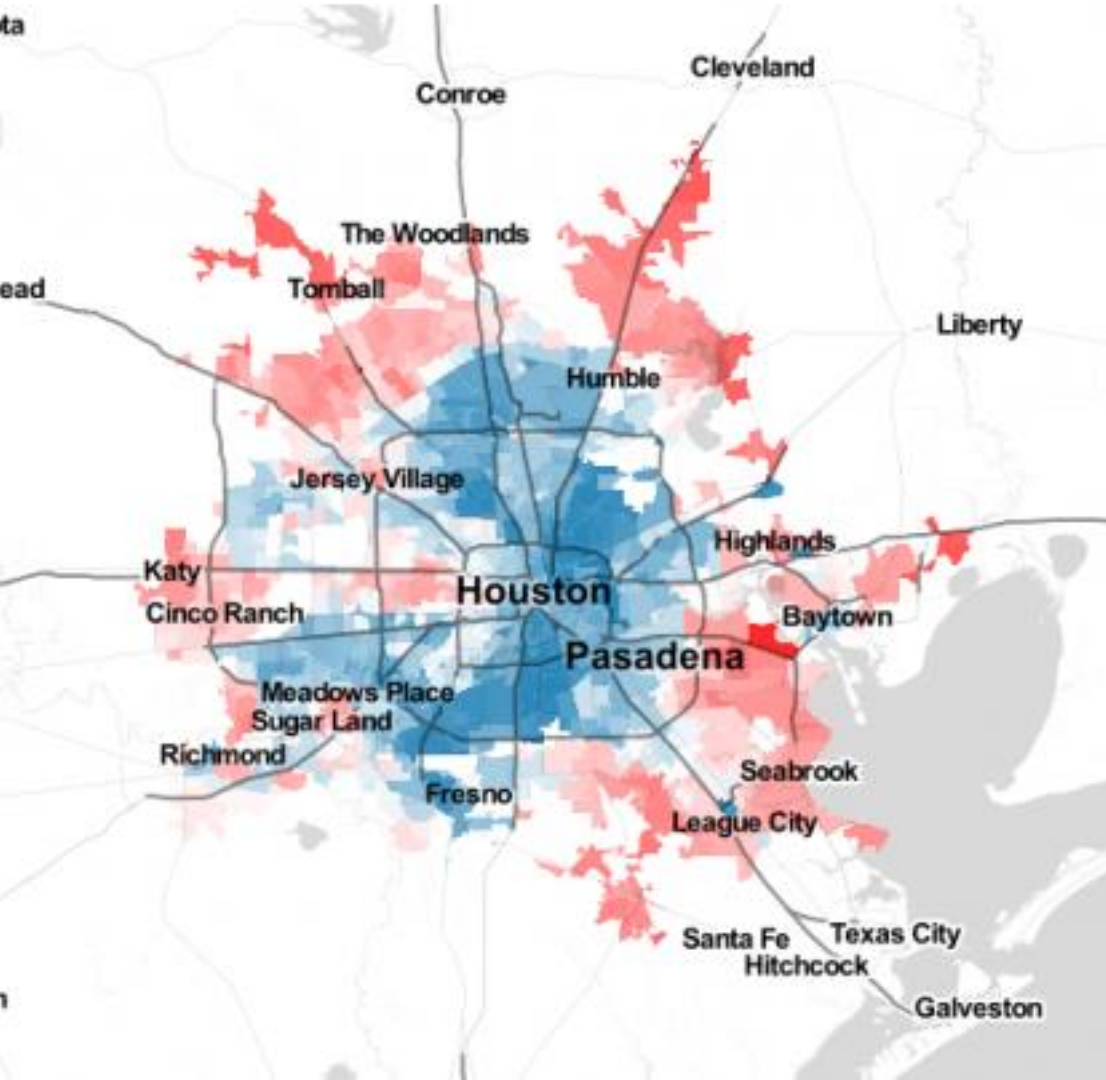
# Political Polarization in America

## Gaps in Presidential Job Approval, by Subgroup

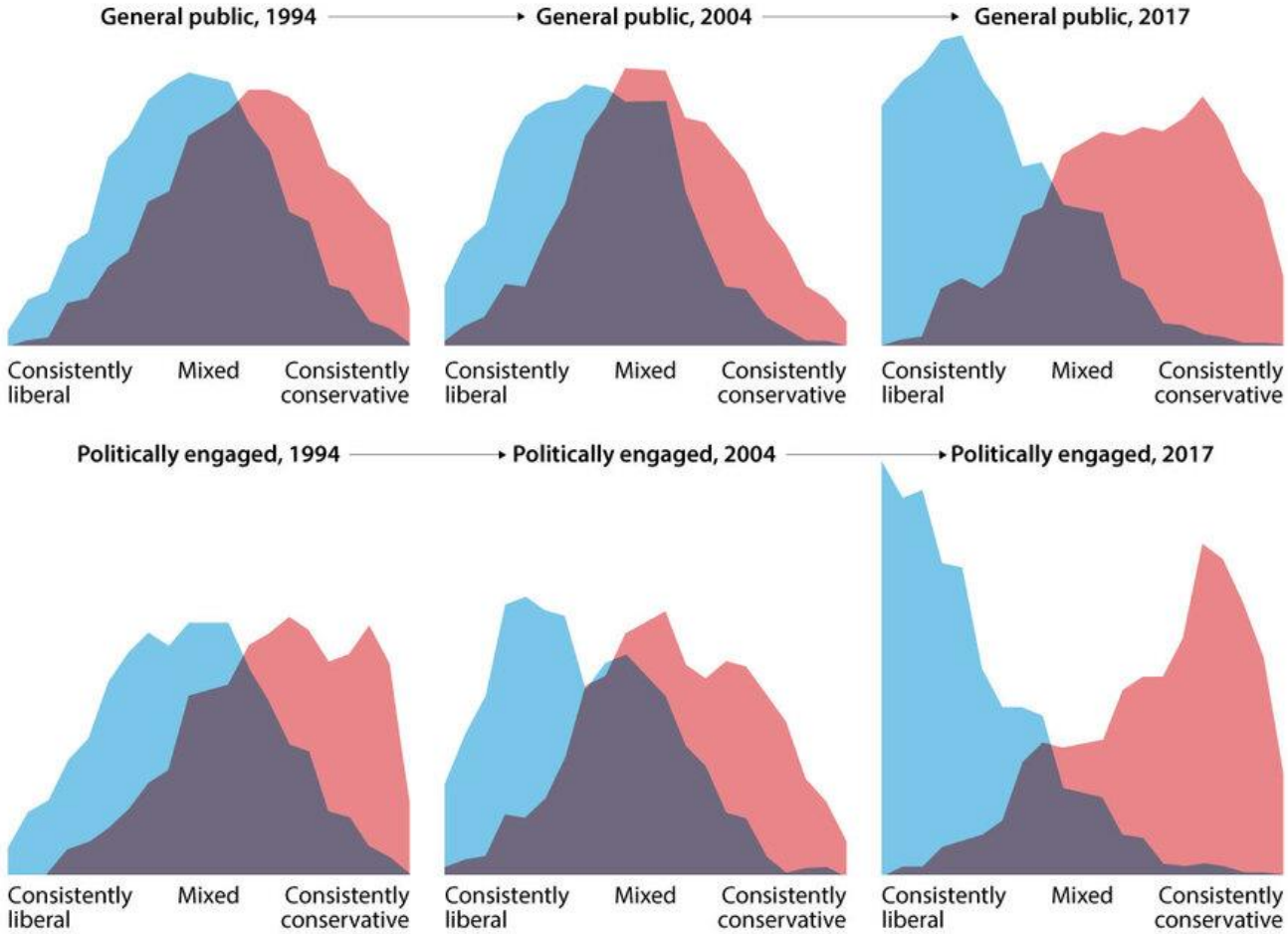
■ Joe Biden ■ Donald Trump ■ Barack Obama ■ George W. Bush ■ Bill Clinton



# Political Polarization in America



The political divide between liberal and conservative views has widened far more among the most politically engaged Americans.



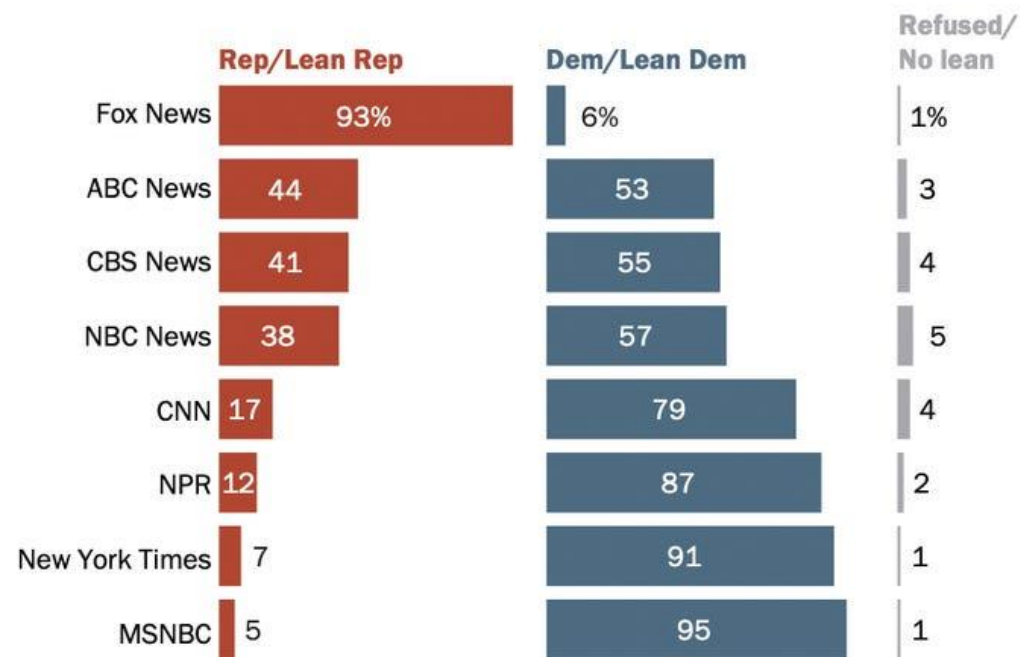
# Polarization

- *What part does the media have to play?*

# Polarization of TV

## U.S. adults who name Fox News or MSNBC as their main political news source are equally partisan

% who say they identify as \_\_\_ among those who name each as their main source for political and election news

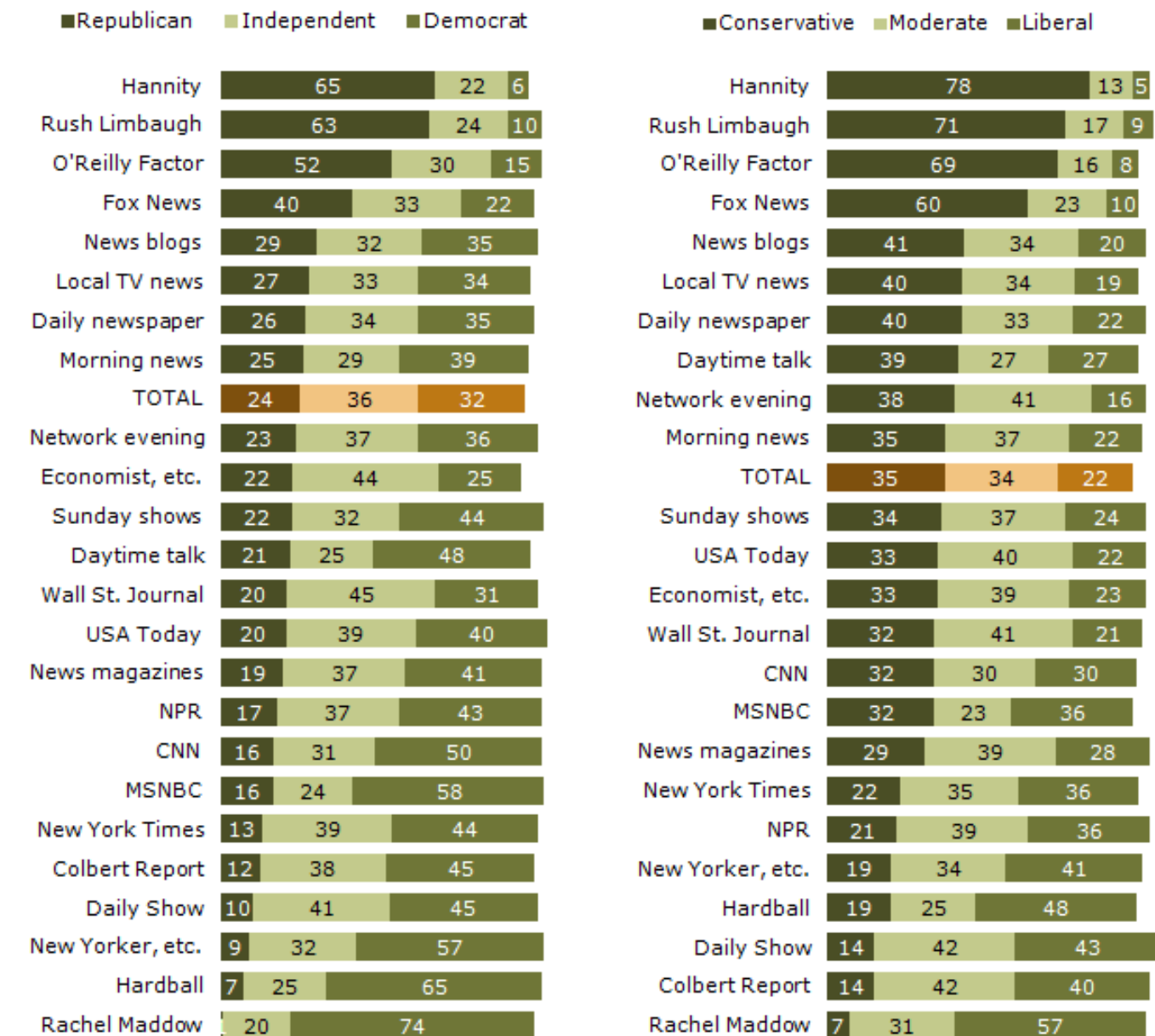


Note: Main source asked as an open-ended question. Outlets mentioned by less than 2% as main source not shown.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Oct. 29-Nov. 11, 2019.

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

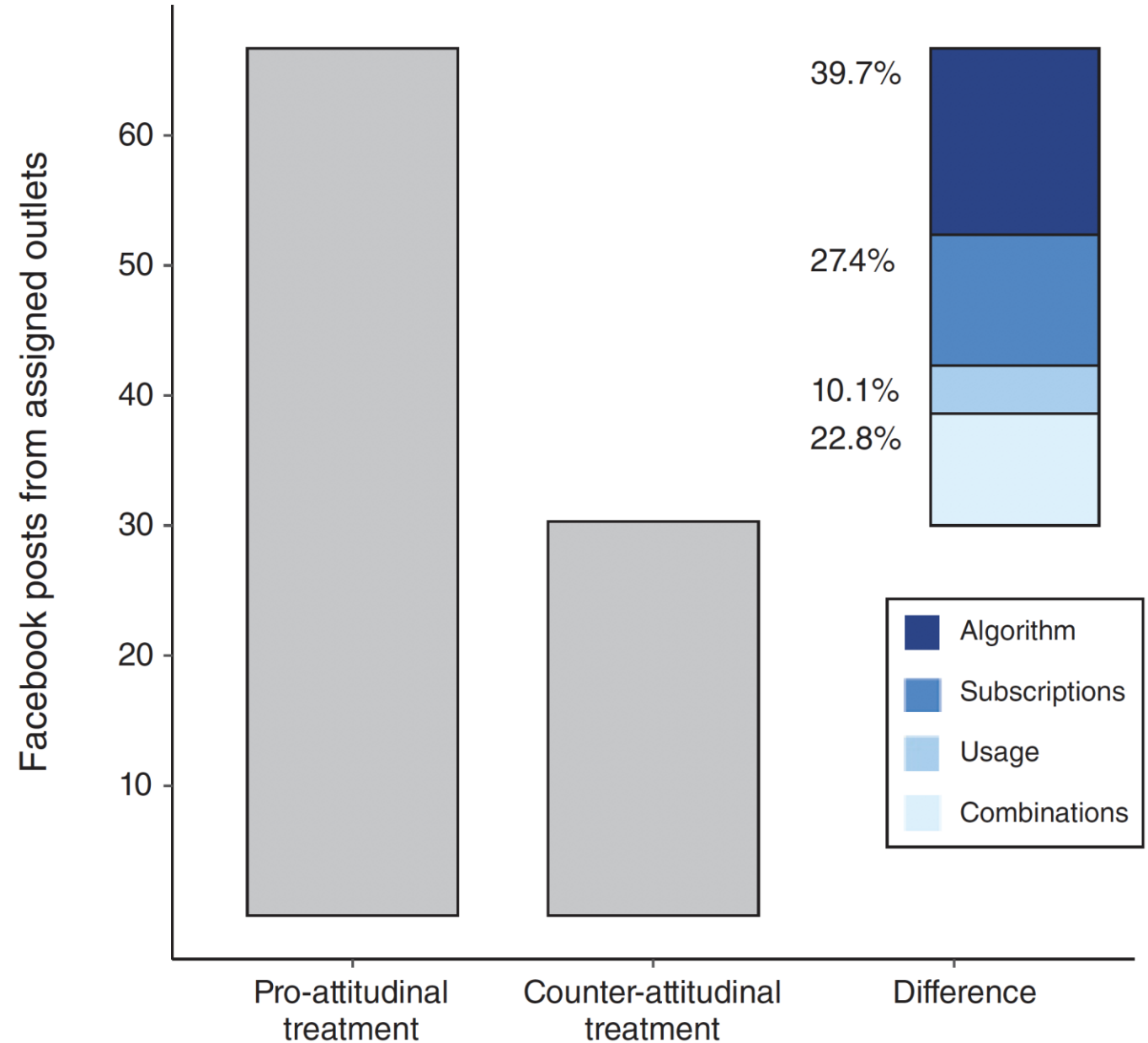
## Partisanship and Ideology of News Audiences



PEW RESEARCH CENTER 2012 News Consumption Survey. Figures may not add to 100% because of rounding; don't know not shown. Based on regular readers/viewers/listeners of each news source.

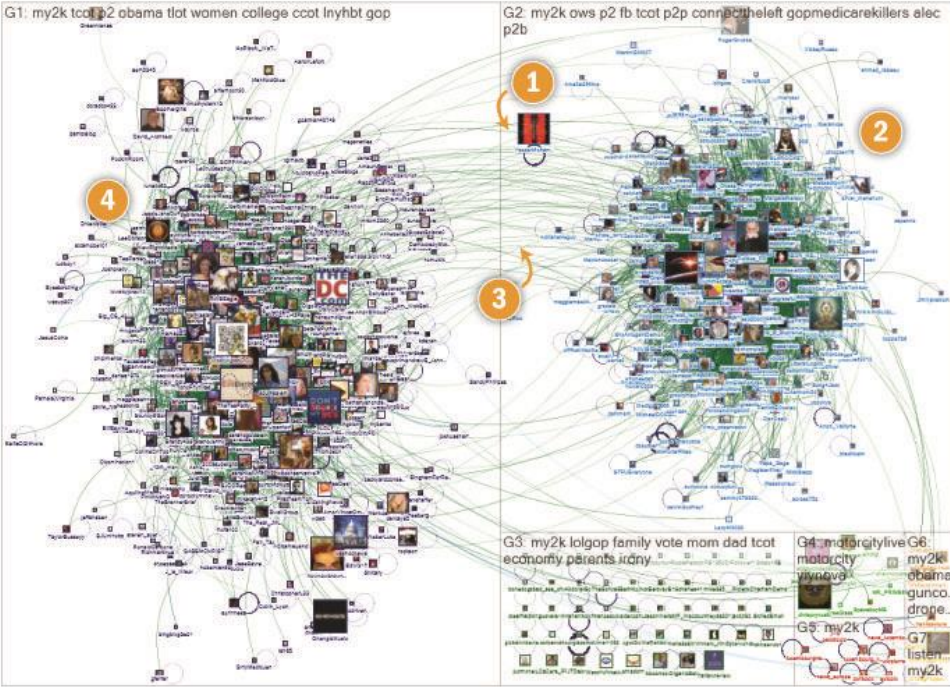
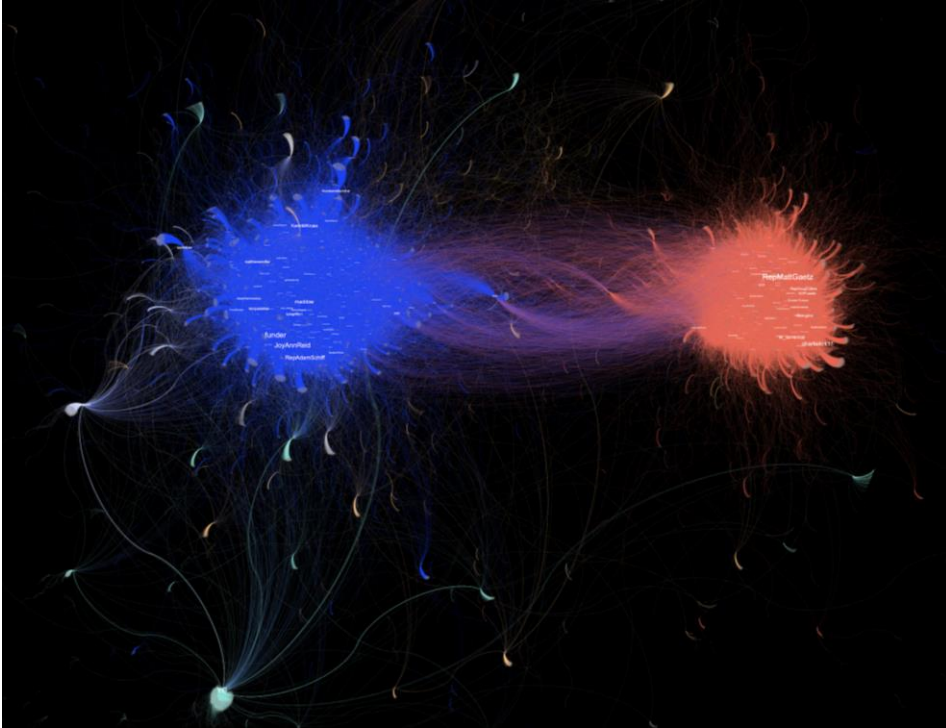
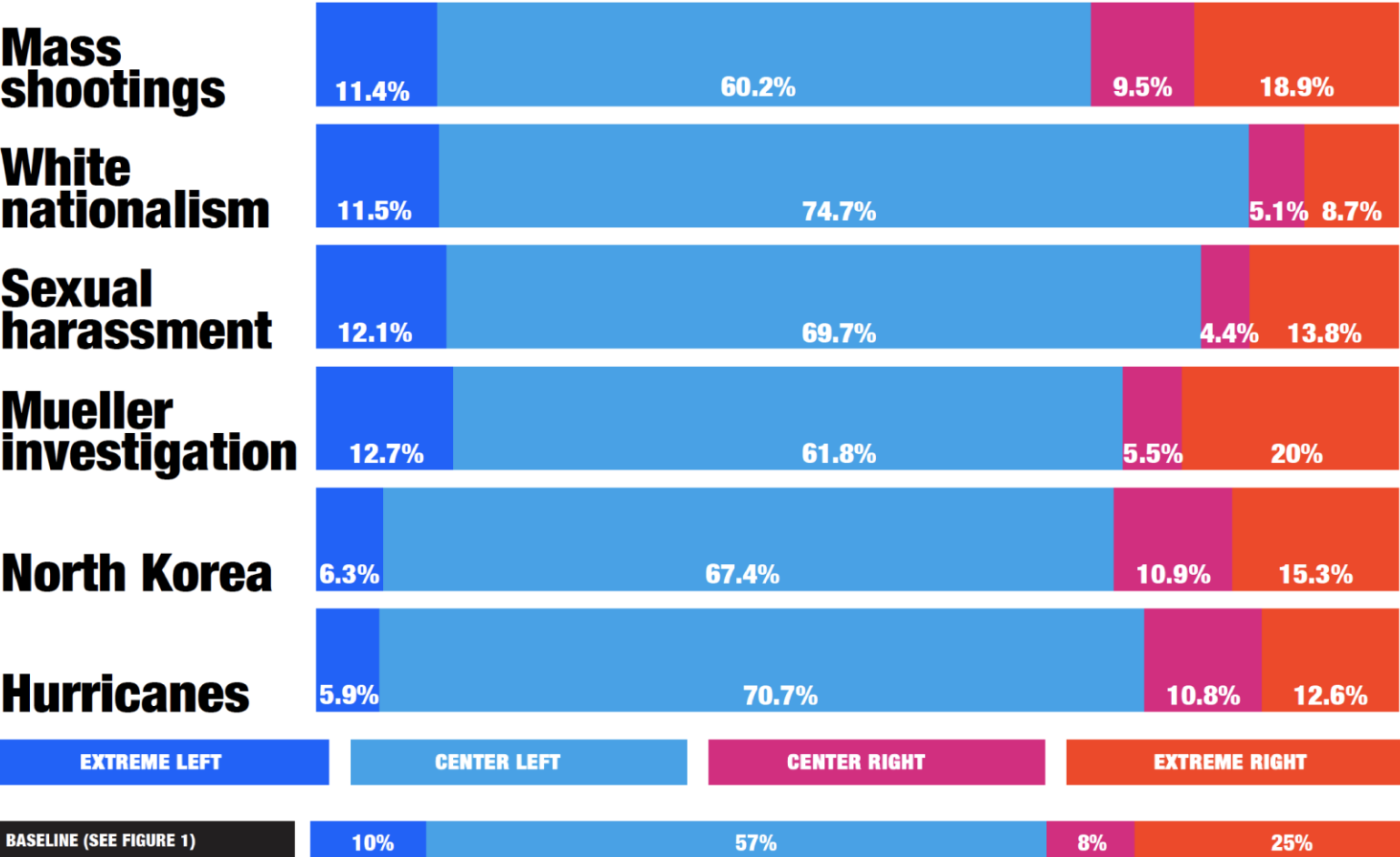
# Polarization of Facebook

- Effect of algorithms
- From subscriptions to filtering news feed
- Customized ads
- Echo chamber



# Polarization of Twitter

Figure 5  
Ideological segment proportions by issue



# Polarization

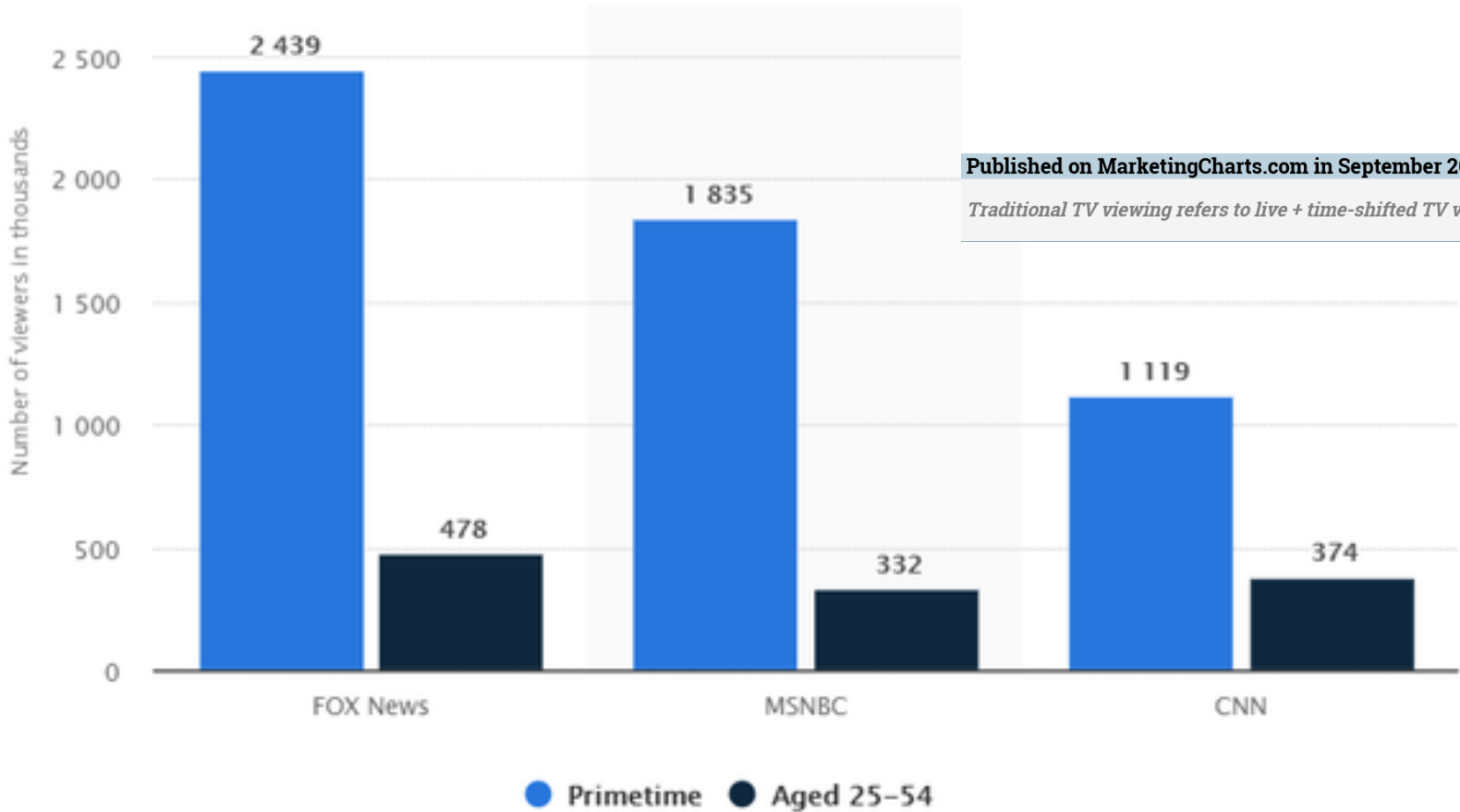
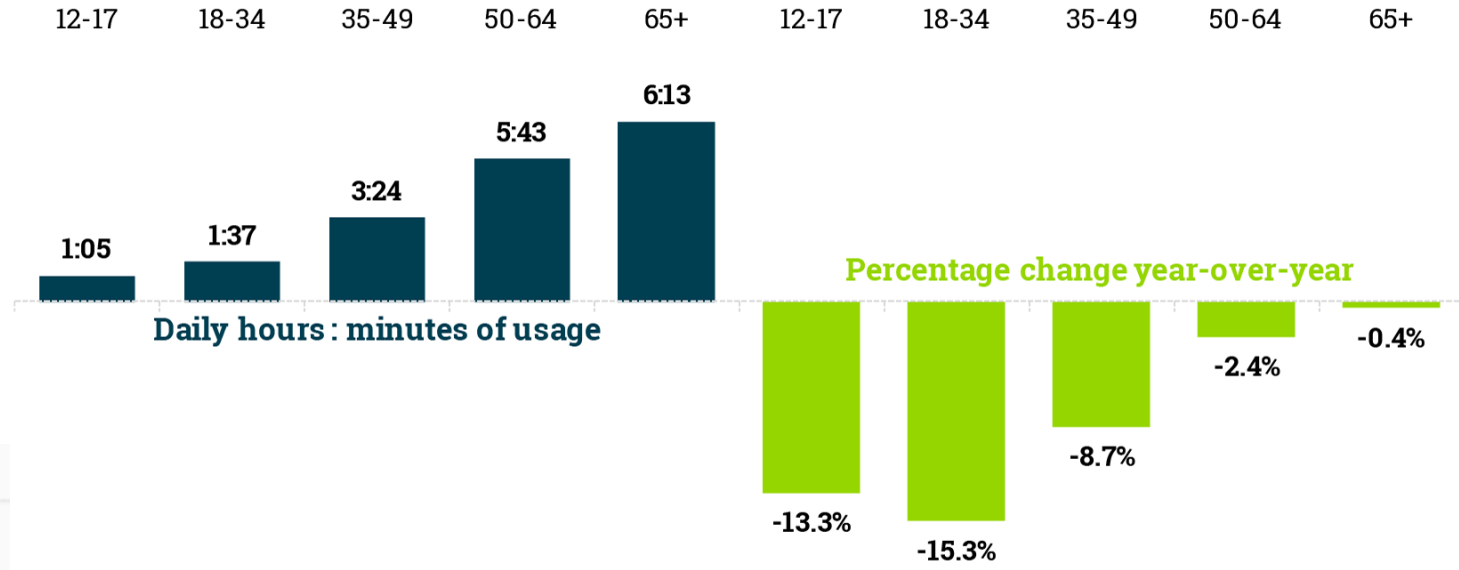


- *How are people responding?*



# US Traditional TV Viewing in Q1 2020

# Decline of TV



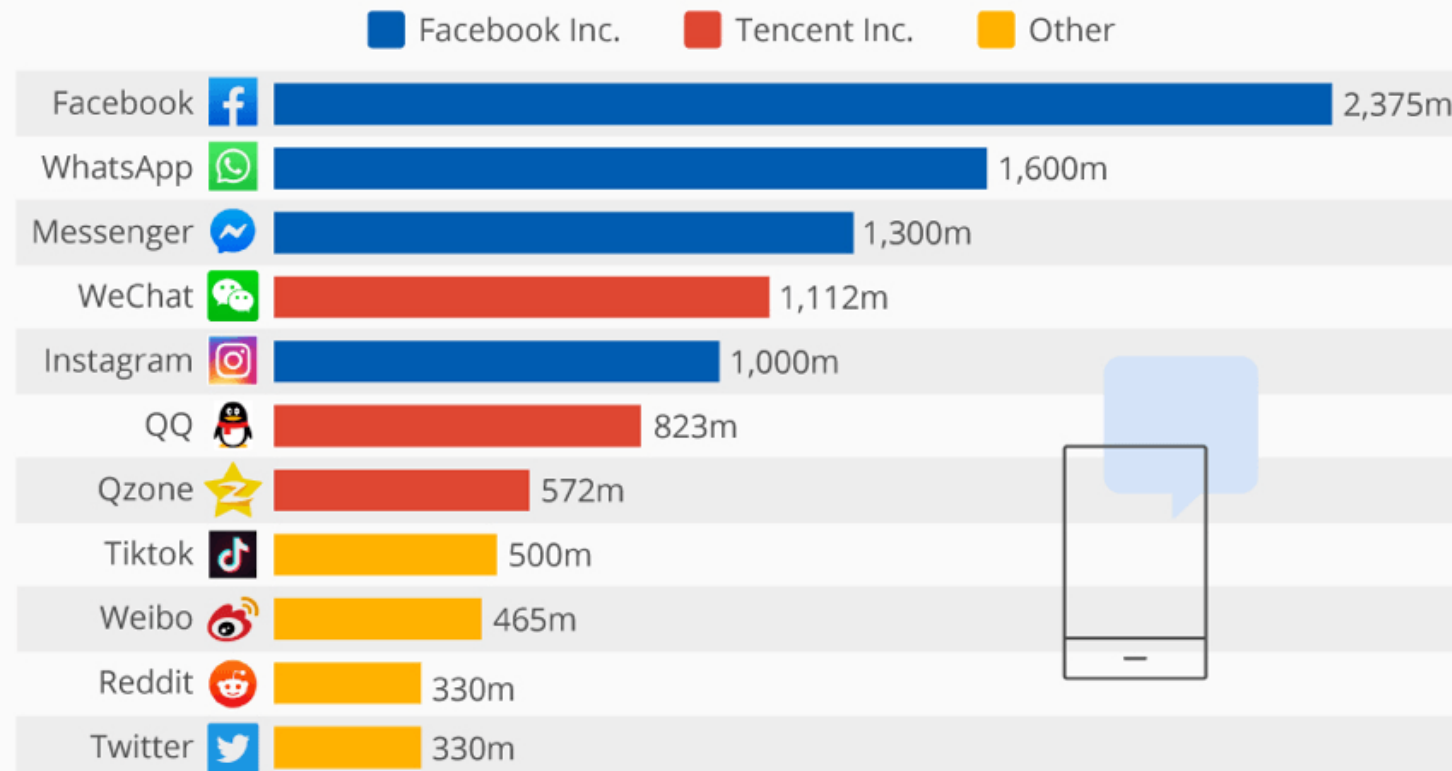
Published on MarketingCharts.com in September 2020 | Data Source: Nielsen

Traditional TV viewing refers to live + time-shifted TV viewing

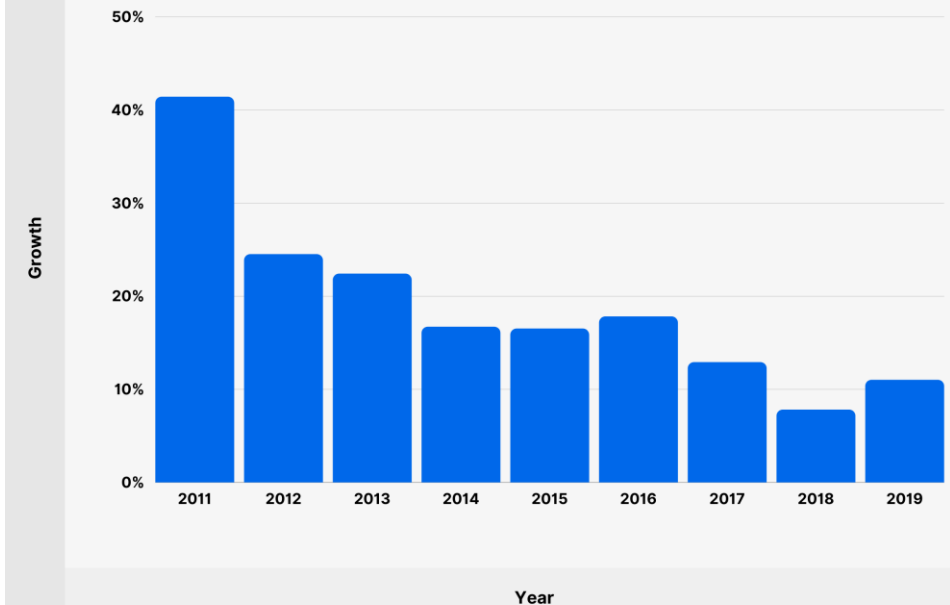
# Slowing of Facebook Growth

## Facebook Inc. Dominates the Social Media Landscape

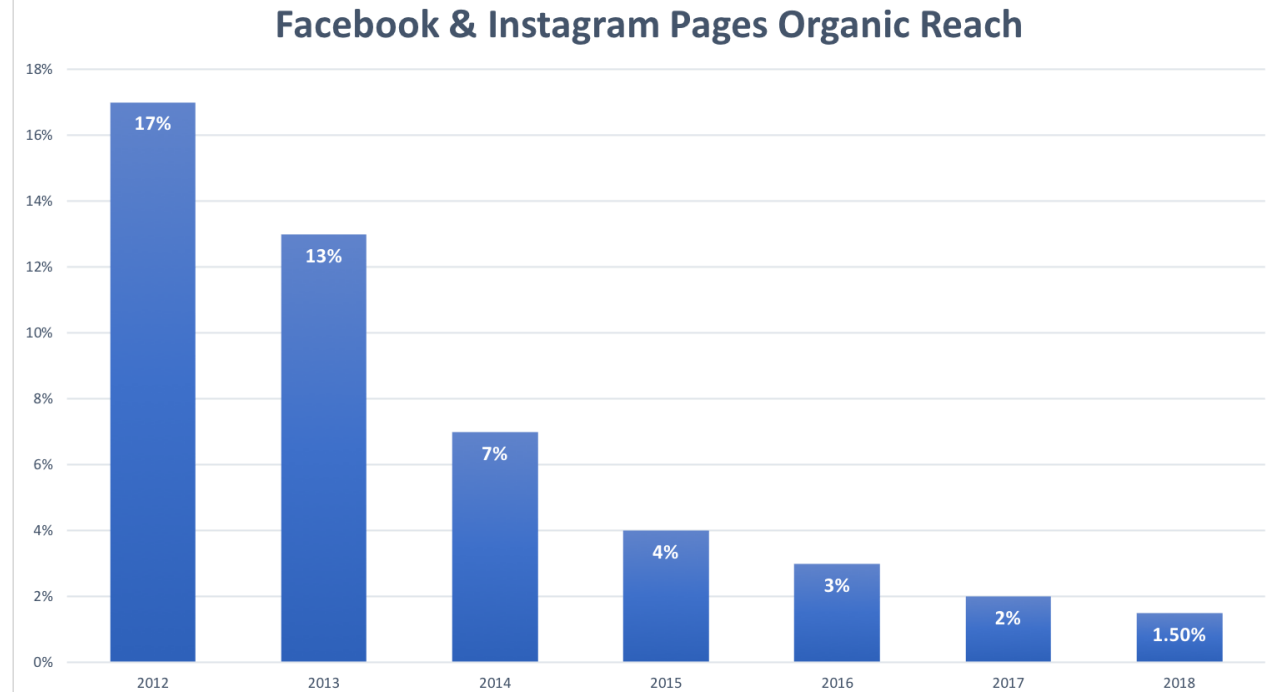
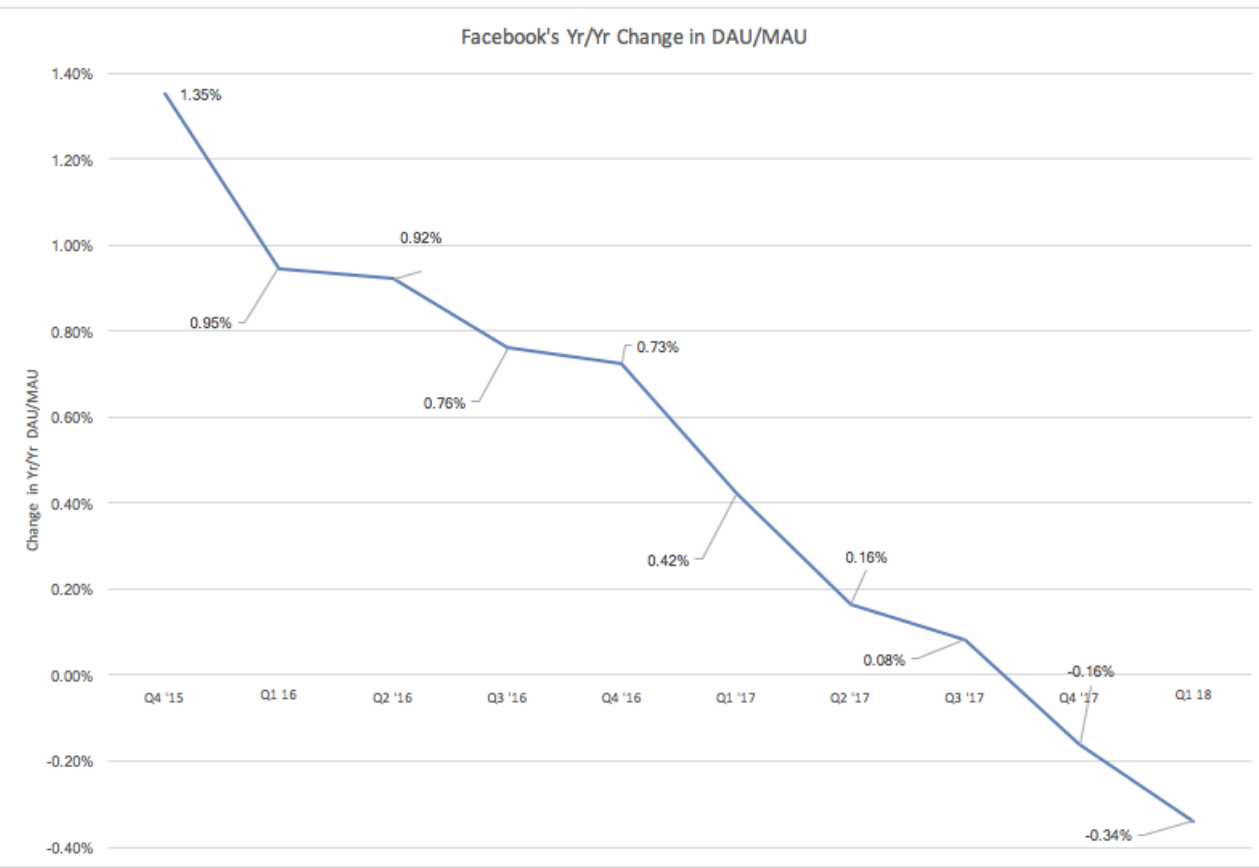
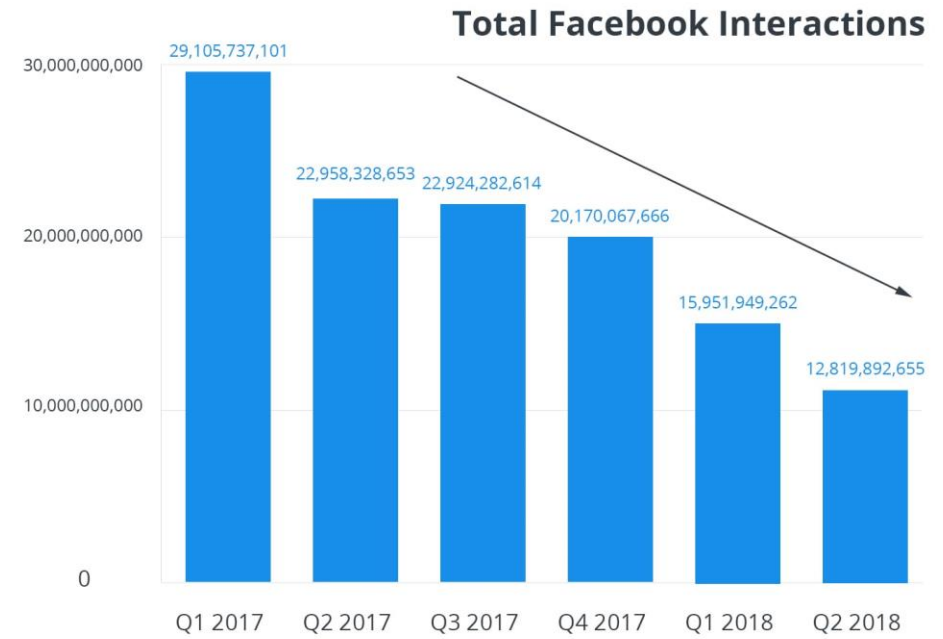
Monthly active users of selected social networks and messaging services worldwide\*



## Facebook User Growth Rate History



# Slowing of Facebook Engagement



# Podcasts

- Accessibility
  - Time, place
  - multitasking
- Openness
  - Variety of guests
  - Based on topic, not view
- Intimacy
  - Conversation, interview, dialogue
  - Loyalty, building community





# Podcast Examples

## **Pro-Grace**

- Open conversations about abortion

## **Holy Post**

- Tough topics, showing both sides

## **Joe Rogan Experience**

- Interview diverse, alternative views

## **NPR**

- Topics, experts, surpassing radio

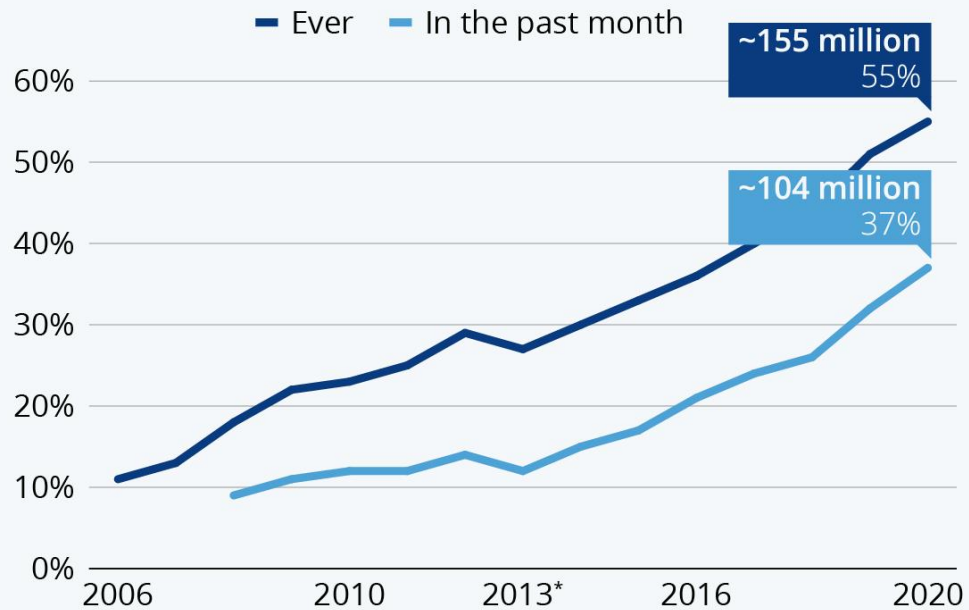
## **New North Church**

- “Stewarding Your Words”

# Growth of Podcast Use

## The Steady Rise of Podcasts

Percentage and number of Americans (12+) who have listened to a podcast in the past



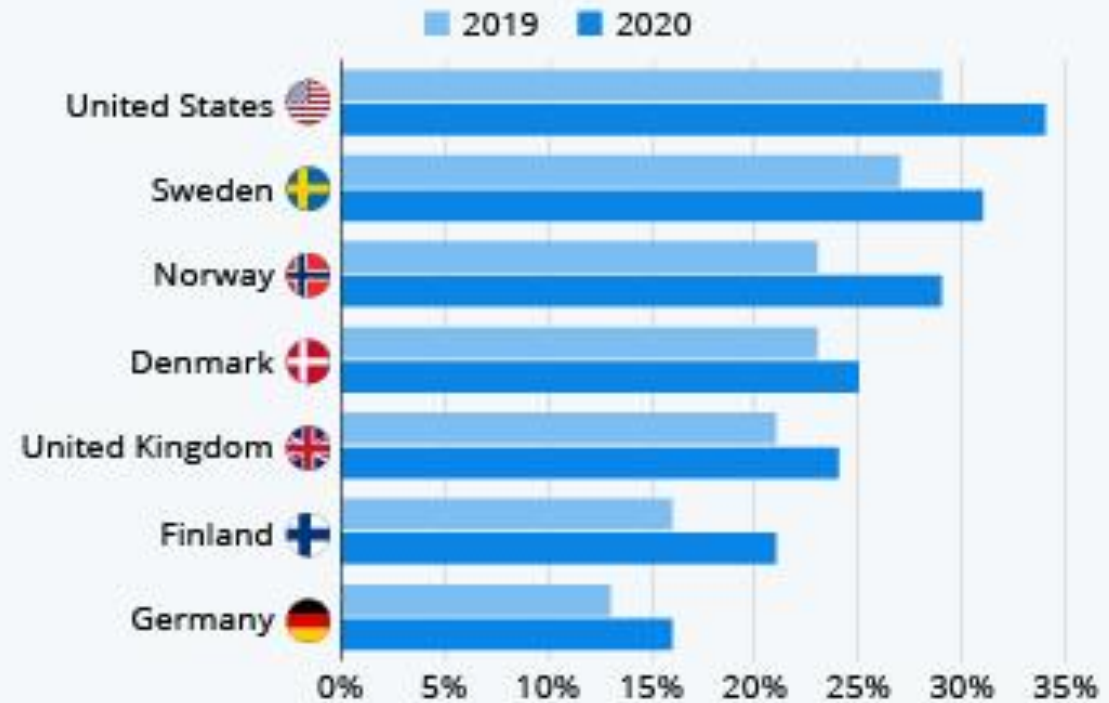
\* in 2013, the source changed the definition of what qualifies as a podcast  
Sources: Edison Research, Triton Digital



statista

## Podcasts Rising in Prominence

Share of people that listen to podcasts on a weekly basis



Based on the responses of over 14,000 adults.  
Source: AudienceProject

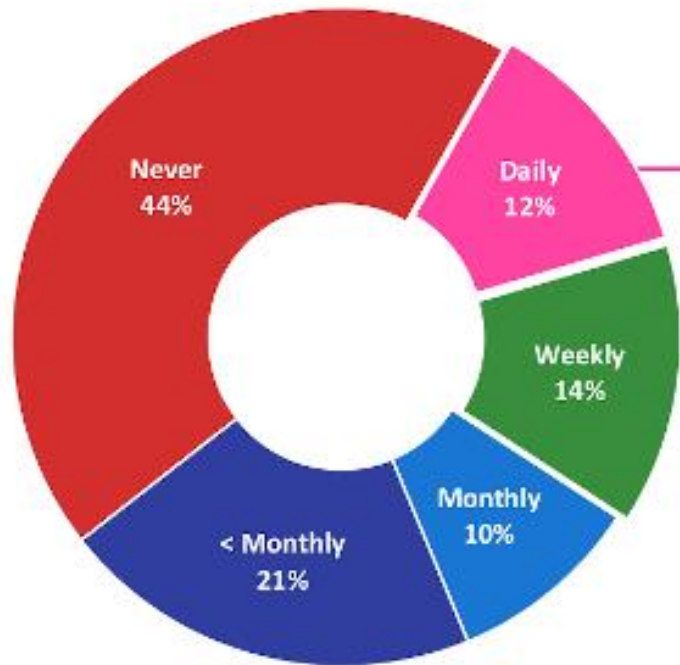


AudienceProject

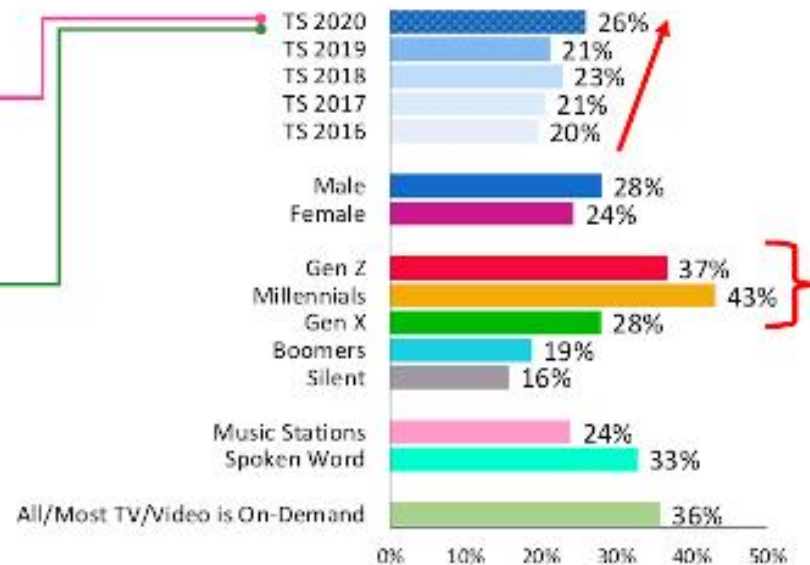
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# Intensity of Podcast Use

More Than One in Four Now Listens to Podcasts Weekly or More, Led By Gen Z, Millennials, and Spoken Word Fans

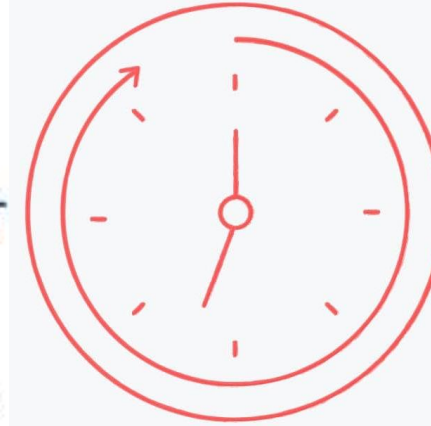


% Who Listen to Podcasts/  
On-Demand Audio Weekly or More



ERLO

## Podcast Statistics: Time Spent



**82.4%**

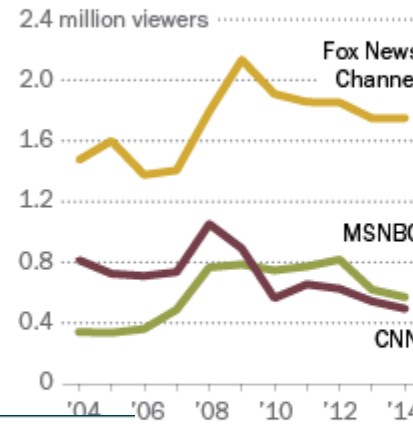
of podcast listeners spend more than seven hours a week listening to podcasts.

(Discover Pods, 2019)

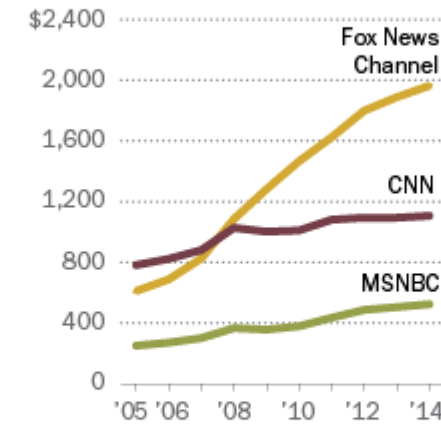
# Usage Compared

## Cable News Struggles With Shrinking TV Audience Despite Steady Revenue

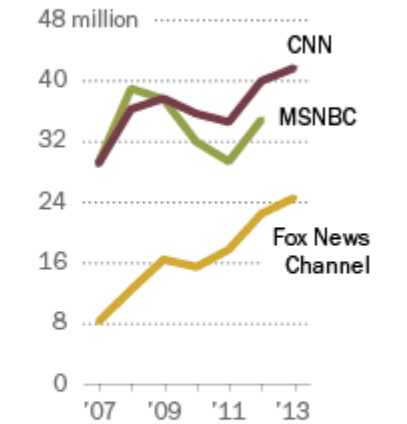
Cable news channel viewership



Total revenue for cable news channels, in millions of dollars



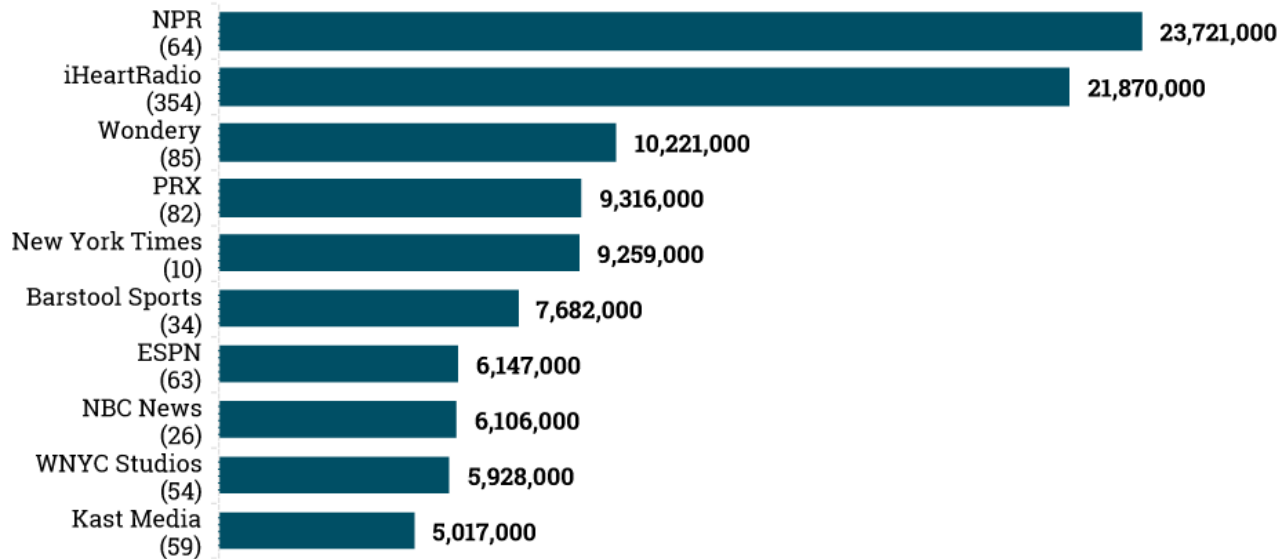
Average unique monthly visitors to cable news websites



Viewership data measured as median viewership during the hours of 8PM-11PM. 2014 viewership data reflect all other years are Jan.-Dec. All revenue figures are estimates. MSNBC website data unavailable for 2013 due to measurement. Source: Nielsen Media Research (viewership and website visitors); SNL Kagan (revenue).

ARCH CENTER

## Top Podcast Publishers in January 2020 by US unique monthly audience



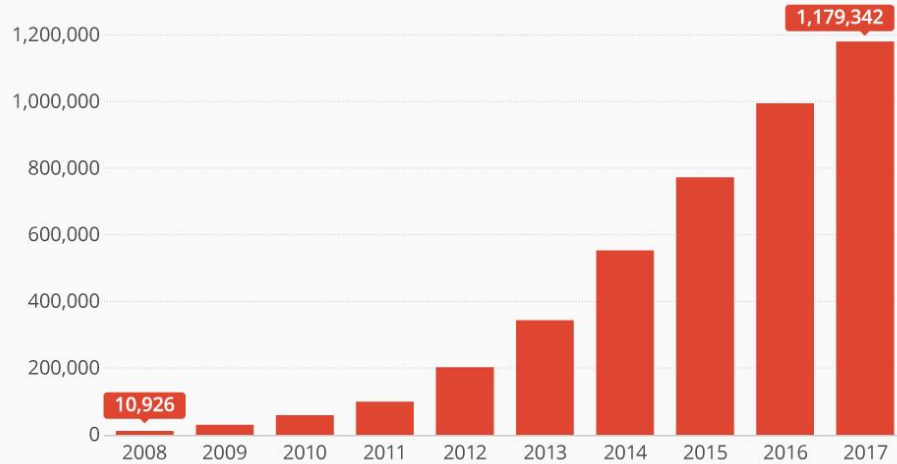
Published on MarketingCharts.com in March 2020 | Data Source: Podtrac  
 Total mobile and desktop podcast audience. The unique monthly audience refers to "the total of unique audience members who stream or download [the] publisher's podcast content across all shows they produce." | Figures in parentheses indicate the number of active shows for each publisher.



# Rise of Reddit

## The Explosive Growth of Reddit's Community

Number of subreddits, i.e. forums dedicated to a particular topic, available on Reddit\*



\* all figures as of the end of the respective year; 2017 figure as of November 12  
Source: Reddit Metrics



JAN 2020

## REDDIT OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL HEADLINES FOR REDDIT USE AROUND THE WORLD

NUMBER OF WORLDWIDE MONTHLY ACTIVE REDDIT USERS



430 MILLION

SHARE OF POPULATION AGED 13+ THAT USES REDDIT EACH MONTH



7.1%

YEAR-ON-YEAR INCREASE IN MONTHLY ACTIVE REDDIT USERS



+30%

NUMBER OF NEW POSTS PUBLISHED TO REDDIT DURING 2019\*



199 MILLION

ANNUAL INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF COMMENTS POSTED TO REDDIT\*



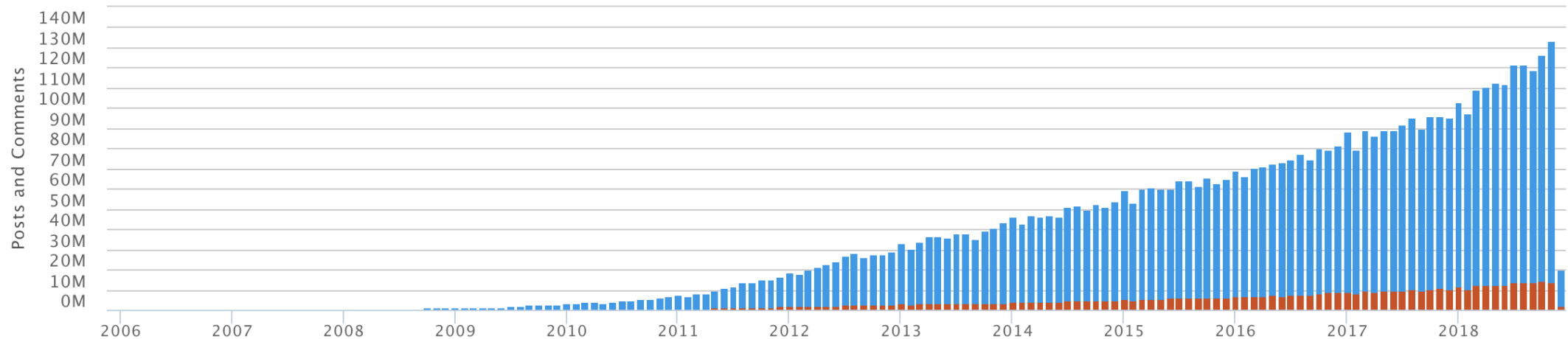
+37%

173

SOURCE: REDDIT (JANUARY 2020). \*NOTE: FIGURE FOR NEW POSTS PUBLISHED TO REDDIT ONLY INCLUDES POSTS PUBLISHED BETWEEN JANUARY AND OCTOBER 2019, SO THE FIGURE FOR POSTS MADE THROUGHOUT 2019 IS LIKELY HIGHER. FIGURE FOR ANNUAL GROWTH IN THE NUMBER OF COMMENTS REFLECTS THE YEAR-ON-YEAR CHANGE TO OCTOBER 2019.



## Reddit Activity (Complete History)



# The Shift

- *Polarization & decline of mainstream news & social media*
- *Increased engagement with platforms that facilitate meaningful dialogue*



# Significance

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## Desire for Dialogue

- *Context of the pandemic  
– separation, controversy*
- *Where does conversation happen?*
- *Where do we look for information?*



# Our Calling

*When & where does discipleship happen?*

*How & does evangelism happen?*

# Communication in Church

***What is our primary means of communicating with our people?***

- Advantages & Disadvantages...
- Considering forums

***What about our preaching style?***

- Learning from podcasts – interaction, questions, alternating speakers...

***What kind of culture are we making?***

- Crouch – on a small enough scale, nearly everyone can change the world



# Communication in Church

- **James 1:19** – Quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to become angry
- **Romans 12:2** – do not conform...
- **Romans 12:14** – try to live at peace
- **Romans 14:1** – not quarrel over disputable matters
- **Romans 15:7** – accept one another
- **John 17:20-23** – unity as witness





Relevance to Project

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### **Interviewing recent converts**

- Focused topic – how & why they came to faith
- Diverse testimonies – gospel applications, stories, backgrounds
  - Seeking to gain perspective, compassion, fluency
  - Seeking to equip for evangelism, discipleship